Message from the Sevagram Hut

Reg. No. B3092

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

VOL. XIII. No. 44 AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 1950 TWO ANNAS

SUGAR SHORTAGE

"There is intense dissatisfaction among the people on account of sugar shortage. Why have you maintained silence on it? Please pacify the people by expressing your views."

If the expression of my views will pacify the people and sweeten their tea-cups, I would do so a hundred times. My view is that in the immediate present, the people must put up with their lot with patience. Grumbling will not help. Even sugar will lose its sweetness if it is taken grumblingly. If possible, let us sweeten our cups with a little humour while sugar is not available. Let us hope that we shall have it in sufficient quantity in a few months.

Think of the future. Think how we can escape from the intrigues or mistakes of sugar-tyrants, whoever they are, i. e. manufacturers, whole-salers, retailers, panicky purchasers, or ministers and Government officers.

This can be done in two ways: by creating on a co-operative basis and in the spirit of non-profiteering, small-scale *gur* and sugar factories in every district, limiting its distribution to the district only. Prepare the sugar and *gur*, wherever practicable from palm trees, instead of sugarcane.

Another way suggested by a friend is to create an all-India organization of the type of a charitable society working as trustee for the workers and the people with a staff taking only moderate remuneration — to take over or found such sugar factories as have to be worked as a large-scale industry. His argument is that as the ideal of *Sarvodaya* is to persuade every owner of property or business to hold it as a trustee for the people, the proper way to do it is to organize such work through associations registered as charitable societies. Not a pie of profit should be distributed as dividend or commission. It should be spent for the people or for further development of the industry, or for the benefit of the cultivators and labourers concerned. This is on the model of the Charkha Sangh conception. This suggestion deserves to be considered. But it can be done only by influential leaders. The first is what men of ordinary classes can work out if they will in their small spheres.

Wardha, 21-12-'49 K. G. MASHRUWALA

WHAT SHALL THE PEOPLE DO?

The President of a Town Congress Committee writes:

"I read Shri Pyarelal's article, *Our Most Precious Legacy*, in the *Harijan* of 16-10-'49. The advice given in the preceding paragraph of this article is good. I try to follow this myself as far as possible and advise others also to do so. But referring to malpractices in Government offices, ration shops, refugee relief camps and rehabilitation agencies, he has suggested in the last paragraph that "it could be checked within twenty-four hours if local people were alert and moved the authorities in an organized manner to take the necessary steps." It is my humble opinion that the suggestion mentioned above is unpractical, when even higher authorities like the top Congress leaders who hold the reins of Government in their hands, do not pay heed to such complaints. I myself thought like Shri Pyarelal in the beginning and used to make like suggestions to other people. They accepted them and made complaints in writing to the authorities. But the experience is that almost all the Government officials are found involved in these malpractices in an organized manner and none is prepared to listen to anybody. The result is that people who want to help the Government have to hang down their heads, while offenders delight with pride and people lose all interest in sending complaints and become sullen with disappointment and frustration.

"I had been after a case since November, 1948. After several reminders to the Chief Commissioner, he called me for an interview in May, 1949. He listened to me attentively for about half an hour, also assured me that he had understood the matter completely and promised to investigate into it personally. After this, he had been written to a number of times but with no result. According to information received from another official, high interests are involved in these malpractices and, therefore, they evade such complaints. I wrote to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Rajendraprasad, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, and others, but only the Prime Minister's Secretariat replied that the matter had been referred to the Chief Commissioner for necessary action. Not even an acknowledgment was received from the others.

"Under such conditions, you cannot expect any citizen to leave his own work and take to the work of purifying the administration in a spirit of service, if he has to run after these officers indefinitely.

"Therefore, I have no courage left in me either to complain to the authorities or to advise others to do so, and I feel that the experience of many has been similar to mine. The fact is that unless the administrative machinery is purified or at least the top Congress leaders, who are in power, give immediate attention on receipt of such complaints, it is a cruel mockery to give such advice to the people as Shri Pyarelal does, and it will only add to their frustration.

"May I hope that at least papers like *Harijan* will, before giving such advice to the people, ask the Government to take suitable action in this direction ?"

Let it be granted that these complaints are true and that to get things done from Government departments is like breaking one's head against a wall. Let us also grant that there is no leader or organization, which can intercede on behalf of the people to get their grievances heard. Let it also be granted that the editor of *Harijan* and Shri Pyarelal are good for nothing and can do nothing in the matter. The question then arises: what shall the people do then? Should they sit with folded hands or alternatively, should they rise in a riot? By neither of these methods are the people's problems going to be solved. The administration has got to improve and the people have got to work for it. And the only course left is the path of Truth and *Ahimsa*, to tread continuously the path of service and self-sacrifice and to remember that ultimately only by Satyagraha can the people make their voice heard.

The writer says: "Under such conditions, you cannot expect any citizen to leave his own work and take to the work of purifying the administration in a spirit of service, if he has to run after such officers indefinitely." If he had used *every* in place of *any* I would have accepted his statement. But if there is not *any* citizen, who is not prepared to work for the betterment of administration to the extent even of risking his everything in a spirit of service and sacrifice, then it should be taken that the people do not deserve a better administration than what they have. Every reform in a country requires for its achievement life-long efforts of many men of noble urges. If there is an attack on the country by an enemy, we have to sacrifice many young lives and properties of the people to defend ourselves. Similarly, only if there are people who will consider it their life-mission to fight against evils like poverty, disease, ignorance, maladministration, bribery, corruption, black-marketing, etc. and who will pursue their efforts unstintingly, will the people be able to progress towards happiness, peace and prosperity. Wilberforce had to spend his lifetime in order to get slavery abolished in England. When Gandhiji was requested by a tailor, named Motilal, to get the customs restrictions removed in Saurashtra, he asked him: "Is there anybody who is prepared to sacrifice his everything for this?" He replied: "I am one, but I am only an ordinary tailor, who is nobody." But Gandhiji said: "You are quite enough for my purpose." And Gandhiji took up this question on the readiness of a single comrade to stand by him, and succeeded. Now citizens have themselves to become both their Motilal and their Gandhiji. For the cause of the Harijans the lives of Shri Viththal Ramji Shinde, Gandhiji, Thakkarbapa and many others have been spent and will have to be spent in the future. In the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhiji had to give his life and we do not know how many more lives may still have to be sacrificed for this. The moral is that unless people are prepared to gird up their loins and devote themselves completely to the task of removing evils in administration from whatever department they have the experience of, the situation will remain as it is. If one out of every thousand persons connected with such affairs will throw himself diligently into this task, and receives co-operation from others, every evil can disappear. Otherwise, petitioning to the Congress President and others can avail them nothing; much less complaining to the Editor of *Harijan*.

Wardha, 16-11-'49 K. G. MASHRUWALA

(Translated from Hindi)

LAND ALLOTMENT IN EAST PUNJAB

Facts and figures are now available regarding the "final" land allotment in the East Punjab. They eloquently expose the reactionary character of the present Congress regime in this unfortunate province.

During the last two years, the sturdy and prosperous peasants of the West Punjab who came to the East Punjab as landless, homeless, helpless refugees, have undergone untold sufferings owing to gross indecision and inefficiency on the part of the Government.

Now, after two years of frustration and waste, the "final" decisions have come, decisions which have rudely shocked the patient peasant masses. For they find that while 50 "refugee" landlords are to get 296.5 acres each on an average, 2.34 lacs of poor peasants will get only 1.5 acres each on an average, i.e. the highest holdings will be about 200 times larger than the lowest ones.

Here are the complete figures of land allotment:

No. of Claimants	Total Net Allotment (Figures in acres)	Average Net Allotment
50	14,822	296.5
66	13,860	210.0
200	31,200	156.0
442	45,366	102.6
879	66,983	76.2
6,245	2,79,477	44.6
16,599	4,14,577	24.9
71,624	8,33,504	11.6
75,248	3,54,244	4.7
2,34,707	3,58,815	1.5
4,06,060	24,12,848	

These figures clearly show that the whole land allotment policy has been conceived in the interests of a minority of big landlords to the detriment of the masses of poor farmers. The policy is designed not to rehabilitate the peasant masses on an economic basis but to preserve and strengthen the vested interests, the landed aristocracy. The poor peasants have not only been given miserably small and uneconomic holdings but in small fragmented patches at long

distances from each other and from the areas where they have been temporarily settled.

Thus, far from solving the problem of impoverished peasant refugees, it will only aggravate their sufferings. It will be impossible for them to eke out a living from the tiny patches given to them. It will lead to interminable disputes among them about boundaries and water supply. And it will compel them once more to migrate to distant places to earn their food and living.

While there is such loud talk of rural development and revitalization of agriculture, the East Punjab Government has adopted a policy which deliberately makes agricultural holdings more uneconomic than ever before, more fragmented than ever before.

It is clear that the Congress Government is interested neither in the welfare of the refugee peasants nor in the revitalization of agriculture but in maintaining the *status quo* in land distribution and agriculture, in keeping the position of the landed aristocracy intact. Not only have the upper class minority been given the bulk of the available land but also the best land, the irrigated areas, the garden colonies, the lucrative vegetable lands near the towns. It is this minority, who, on account of blood-relations or political support or pecuniary considerations, occupy a cherished place in the hearts of the ministry and therefore in the rehabilitation schemes. It is their interests that govern the policy of the Government , not the interests of the common people of the province.

If a truly democratic government had been in power, having the interests of the people at heart, the rehabilitation policy would have been used as an instrument for bringing about a fundamental transformation of the stagnant rural society of the East Punjab. It is not generally appreciated that the great Punjab calamity of 1947 was also a great historic opportunity to bring about such a transformation. Land could have been redistributed on a just and equalitarian basis. The problem of land shortage, which was aggravated by partition, could have been met and all the rural refugees easily and quickly resettled through the establishment of a province-wide network of Government-aided co-operative farms. Thus a peaceful agrarian revolution could have been accomplished in a short time.

But the great opportunity has been missed. Instead, a most reactionary and retrogressive policy is being pursued which would only increase the sufferings of the rural masses and leave agriculture to decay.

But the Congress Government should take a warning from history. Those who attempt to preserve their vested interests at the expense of the people at the present time are only digging their own graves. The mightiest kingdoms and empires of the world have been swept into oblivion and are even now being swept into oblivion by the whirlwinds of peasant discontent. Nothing can stand before the elemental land hunger of the peasant masses.

There is still time and scope for adopting a revised land policy in East Punjab somewhat on the following lines :

1. That the distribution of land be made on more equalitarian lines and the Government include their own lands in the distributable land.
2. That rehabilitation schemes cover not only those who were peasant proprietors in the West Punjab but also landless agricultural workers.
3. That the peasants are given, on an average, 10 (gross) acres each, when the area available is about 30 lakhs cultivated and 10 lakhs uncultivated.
4. That holdings be allotted as far as possible where the peasants have already temporarily settled so that no or minimum movement is involved.
5. That the Government accept and declare *co-operation* as the basic principle of rehabilitation and encourage the establishment by refugee peasants of co-operative farms to which liberal financial, technical assistance be given.
6. That the integrity of the people coming from same areas in the West Punjab should remain intact by settling them in nearer areas in the East Punjab so that they may continue to enjoy their old social contacts which is essential for their otherwise hard life.

If the Government does not soon revise its policy and meet the basic needs of the peasant, forces will be released which will vest power in right hands. No government can arrest the forces of history.

MULKRAJ SHETHI (a refugee)

[*Note*: Perhaps the reason for allotting very large areas to a few is that they had lost also equally or even larger holdings in the West Punjab. But if the policy of *status quo* is stressed, no reforms can be achieved. Land must primarily be held by the person who can cultivate it himself and so a family should hold no more land than it could personally cultivate. They can and should be encouraged to form co-operative societies or partnership holdings and thus create large consolidated holdings. But cultivation through labourers and tenants must not be encouraged. They should be compensated, if necessary and possible, in some manner other than landlordism for their greater losses. As a matter of fact, a great exodus like a great revolution is recommencing life on a clean slate. Nor should a holding allotted be so small as to be uneconomic. An acre and a half is, I believe, not considered by any one as economic, not even perhaps 4.7 acres, the figure above it. It is better that people are encouraged to take to other means of livelihood than cultivate uneconomically except again jointly with others and along with other subsidiary occupations.

22-10-'49 —K. G. M.]

GLEANINGS
Gathered at Bapu's Feet
by Mira
Pages iv, 26 Price As. 6 Postage etc. As. 2
NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Post Box 105, AHMEDABAD

HARIJAN

January 1 1949

MESSAGE FROM THE SEVAGRAM HUT

[The following is the text of the broadcast made by Dr. Rajendraprasad on behalf of the World Pacifist Meeting from Gandhiji's hut at Sevagram on 24th December, 1949, on the eve of the commencement of the Meeting.]

About one hundred Pacifists of the world have been meeting in India and discussing in an earnest manner the great problem of establishing peace in the world. They send their greetings and good wishes to the peoples everywhere. Those who have met come from 34 countries but they do not claim to represent their States or Governments which have their own way of looking at things and solving their problems. The Members of the Conference are ordinary men and women following different avocations in life but anxious for peace — peace which is not merely absence of war but peace positive which is goodwill in action — peace for which they have worked and suffered in their own humble way. Their appeal is to the common men and women of the world to search for the causes which breed war and to remove them. These causes are rooted in the desires and ambitions of individuals and nations ; these desires and ambitions conflict with similar desires and ambitions in others. Lasting and fruitful peace can be assured if individuals and nations curb their ambitions and keep them within limits. In modern times achievements of man in the conquest of nature have served only to whet that ambition and pour oil on its flames. The world has seen two devastating wars within a generation, each fought with the object of ending wars but succeeding only in leaving a legacy of hate and another war in the making. Mahatma Gandhi saw the futility of trying to wash, as the Indian saying is, mud with mud, to end war by war, by more deadly armaments and better regimentation of the peoples. He tried to tackle it at its root by making the individual a fit instrument of peace — simplifying his life, reducing his individual needs, spreading and securing confidence and love all round, fearless himself giving cause to none to fear him. For creating the atmosphere that will be helpful and beneficial in producing that kind of individual, our lives have to be remodelled. Life is an integrated whole and man cannot achieve peace while living a life which breeds war. Environment undoubtedly influences man but man can alter and change his environments — can in fact create them, if he is determined and follows the straight and difficult path which is no other than that which has been pointed out to mankind by all seers and prophets in all the great faiths of the world, no other than the one taught by the Hindu seers of old *ahimsa paramo dharmah* — non-violence is the supreme law and duty — no other than what Christ taught in the great Sermon on the Mount. Man has not only to restate and reiterate the great principle but to find ways and means to implement it in his everyday life. That can be done by each individual adopting what may be described in one word as simplicity for himself and active goodwill towards others. Simplicity requires and demands greater and greater dependence on oneself and independence of others. Active goodwill can manifest itself in service to others. Individuals constitute nations and can influence their compeers and comrades by their lives, even more than by their words. They can also exert influence on their Governments to change over from a war basis to a peace basis. But to do this effectively they must purify their own lives and simplify their own needs. When we speak about simplifying needs it does not mean reducing ordinary and normal standards of living. It only means that they should not allow themselves to be enslaved and dominated by those material needs but should be in a position and have the strength to control them.

When we think of peace in the world we may not ignore the fact that exploitation of one section of humanity by another is the direct effect of the domination and enslavement of the exploiting section by its ever-mounting need of satisfying its ever-rising standard of living ; it is also the direct cause of conflict between individuals and between nations. Exploitation must therefore end in every form — social, political, economic and even religious — and everywhere in Asia, in Africa, in Europe and in America. Education of the individual, which is the same thing as education of the people at large, in the art of simplicity and self-dependence, in methods which can enable him to seek happiness within himself and to do without having to exploit others is an essential process in the establishment of peace. Man today possesses knowledge and capacity which can enable him to satisfy all his requirements for a comfortable and contented living. But his resources are being used to an ever-increasing extent for destructive purposes. They can be diverted to constructive work, if only every section of humanity can be persuaded to realize that even its own comfort and happiness will increase if it knows how to seek it in renunciation rather than in acquisition — if it can turn hatred into love, fear into confidence, right into duty and exploitation into service. The appeal and prayer therefore of this Conference of the Pacifists of the world to the common man and woman of the world is so to shape and mould his or her own individual life as to make it an abode of peace. Its appeal to the nations is to utilize the material and moral resources which each possesses for constructive purposes. Let the nations bravely abandon their present preoccupation with instruments of destruction and defence.

This is the message of Mahatma Gandhi, the modern apostle of peace, who till the other day walked on this earth and influenced millions by his life and faith ; and it is given on this solemn and sacred day of the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace, from the hut which Gandhiji occupied for years at Sevagram in India.

UNFORTUNATE

Some days ago a friend sent me a copy of a report of a meeting held in Calcutta on 29-11-'49 with Shri J. C. Kumarappa as president. It said that Shri Kumarappa, after strongly criticizing the procurement and pro-capitalist policy of the Government (a report of which was also given),

> "advised the peasants that if the Government want only production without looking after their interest, they should follow the 'scorched earth' policy in respect of the grains produced by them so that the Government cannot get them. The advice of 'scorched earth' policy of Dr. Kumarappa was much appreciated by Sri Suresh Das, Sri Saileshwar Mitra and Sri Sudhir Neogi.
>
> "Dr. P. C. Ghosh criticized the Government for their policy and asked the peasants to unite. He advised them to get fair price from the Government, otherwise they should destroy their production. He also said that if the Government cannot follow the ideals of the Congress, he desires its destruction."

The report further said :

> "Kumar Jana has accepted the advice of Dr. Kumarappa, which will be carried from door to door to the peasants......With a view to making this move a success and to devising ways and means for obstructing the procurement drive, Sri Kumarappa, Shri Dwasarathi Ta and Shri Satyan Chatterji of Birbhum have been selected by this (Dr. Ghosh's) group to work among the cultivators. A conference of this group has been called at Burdwan and it will take place shortly. After this conference the members of this group may resort to Satyagraha in batches in different villages and insist on the peasants not to part with paddy and other foodgrains to the Government agents. The time and date of this Satyagraha has not yet been settled."

I could not believe that even in the worst moments of their anger, Shri J. C. Kumarappa and Dr. P. C. Ghosh could have given the advice quoted above. The advice is so incredibly immoral and violent that I was inclined to regard the report to be an absolute lie and, if perchance, it was proved in an unimpeachable manner that the two or either of them did give such advice, it should be understood to have been given in a very violent state of mind. "Scorched earth" policy is not a non-violent technique even against an attacking enemy ; it can never be resorted to in Satyagraha. *Satyagrahi* peasants would allow their lands, homes, crops and belongings to be seized even by the enemy. Procurement, however unpleasant and unjust, is done for a part of our own people by our own Government, and though it may be open to protest against it in an effective manner, not even one grain of food can be destroyed. It is a sin against God and Nature. None should heed such advice by whomsoever given.

I communicated with Dr. Ghosh and Shri Kumarappa regarding the above report. Dr. Ghosh on behalf of himself and Shri Kumar Jana absolutely denies having made or approved any suggestion of the kind alleged. They agree, to quote Shri Kumar Jana's words as reported by Dr. Ghosh, "there could be no question of destroying foodstuffs when people suffered from want of sufficient foodstuffs.

With regard to Shri Kumarappa's speech, Dr. Ghosh says :

> "As for Kumarappa's speech, it is better that you have it from him. But as far as I remember, he did say that if the Government wanted to take paddy forcibly from the peasants at an unremunerative price and without keeping the necessary reserve for them, then they should destroy the foodstuff rather than surrender it to the Government. I do not agree with this advice. I consider it wrong. I consider it equally wrong to force the peasants to sell their produce at a price which is below their cost of production. It will simply kill the goose which lays golden eggs.
>
> "All the news items beginning from 'Kumar Jana has accepted' and ending with 'Satyagraha has not yet been settled' is a revelation to me."

I asked him since he did not agree with Shri Kumarappa's views, was it not his duty to advise the people so on the spot, as it was such a grave matter? He said that there was no opportunity as Shri Kumarappa, who was the president of the meeting, was the last speaker and the meeting was dissolved after his speech.

I asked Shri Kumarappa. He says that he has not been well reported either by Shri Ghosh or in the report supplied to me. As I have understood from his oral remarks made to me, what he said was that he would not be surprised if people went to the length of destroying their property when a robber laid hands upon it rather than allow it to fall into his hands. It was not that he wanted people to do anything of the kind. He was convinced, he said, that the procurement policy of the government was a policy of 'loot'. The words 'scorched earth' were never used by him.

I accept Shri Kumarappa's version. At the same time we must bear in mind what effect it produced on the minds of even Dr. P. C. Ghosh or Shri Kumar Jana and from that infer how they would be taken by people where sabotage is being openly preached and followed in practice almost as a daily occurrence. Hardly a week goes without a railway tragedy or a riotous disturbance, accompanied with fire and murder taking place somewhere.

However strong one's opinions and feelings might be against the present policy of procurement, controls, rationing, and against Government leaders and their civil service, I am constrained to regard utterances such as the above as extremely unfortunate and full of dangerous possibilities when made by a leading constructive worker. I cannot do better than recall my own unfortunate article during the 1942 movement which, shorn of its provisos, had been

made use of as a Gandhian sanction for every kind of sabotage.

Wardha, 21-12-'49 K. G. MASHRUWALA

SPINNING WHEEL IN A HOME FOR THE HOMELESS

The *Mahipatram Rupram Anath-Ashram* at Ahmedabad has been rendering for many years past useful service to orphans and unfortunate women, who have fallen a victim to social evils. It provides them with food, clothes, residence, etc. Generally such institutions are run on public charities. This institution could not remain outside the influence of the awakening which Gandhiji brought about in the masses.

Gandhiji always maintained that a system which enables an individual to get his maintenance without putting any labour on his part, is by itself derogatory to the self-respect of the individual concerned and finally brings about his moral deterioration. He therefore insisted that charitable institutions should run on self-supporting lines and he always considered the *charkha* as a panacea for all the ills of the Indian people, for it has the inherent capacity of helping one to become self-supporting.

The lady in charge of the *ashrama* is a full *khadi*-wearer. She is doing social service for many years on Gandhian lines. Three years back with the help of a few friends, she started the spining wheel in the *ashrama*. That women and orphans will be able to support themselves by spinning was brought home to them. As time went on, the number of spinners increased. Since the *ashrama* used to get all its clothing requirements (mill cloth) gratis from donors, in the beginning, the *khadi* woven from the yarn spun by them was sold, and the individual spinners were given remuneration for spinning to enable them to be self- reliant in respect of clothes. If an able-bodied inmate, not engaged in studies or some such activity, span 200 hanks per year, she was given six sets of clothes per year, (of course, mill-made, since the *ashrama* used to get them free of cost). At present there are 20 women who have pledged to be self-spun *khadi*-wearers, and spin much more than their own requirements, so that they are able to meet their personal miscellaneous expenses also. Ordinarily each spins 300 hanks during a year. Some even get as much as Rs. 50 to 60 by way of remuneration from spinning during a period of three months. It may be noted that they spin only during their leisure hours after finishing their domestic duties which include also looking after orphan children.

The following figures show the present state of the spinning activities in the *ashrama*:

Number of spinners	40 to 60
Yarn produced	24 mds.
Yarn woven	11 mds. 16 srs.
Khadi produced	1,807 sq. yards
Khadi sold	1,600 sq. yards
Amount realized	Rs. 4,611-3-9

During a period of three years of spinning activity, the accounts reveal a net profit of Rs. 1,293-3-9. It is used in expanding the spinning activity.

The spinning activity having been firmly established, a Harijan weaver was employed with a view to starting weaving and with the aid of the Government four inmates are being trained in weaving. This training will enable elderly women to earn honourable and independent livelihood from a cottage industry. It will give them self-confidence and their former helplessness will vanish.

The *ashrama* took up this year the appeal of Shri Narandas Gandhi to observe Gandhi Jayanti by organizing a spinning programme for eighty-one days. The result was more satisfactory than expected. The figures given below show how such programmes are vitally useful in a campaign of "More Production"

Number of days	81
Daily hours of spinning	4
Number of spinners	43
Yarn spun	235.75 lb.
Hanks	3,385
Counts	14

Each spinner span 78 hanks during 81 days. Each one will get 22 sq. yards of *khadi* for 5½ lbs. of yarn. Along with the cost of making slivers and weaving, *khadi*, which is available at Rs. 2 per yard in *khadi bhandars*, will cost them only 14 annas per yard.

The *ashrama* boys also contributed to this activity according to their capacity:

Number of days	30
Spinners	10
Yarn spun	14 lb.
Number of hanks	200
Counts	14

Each boy spun 20 hanks, i.e. equivalent of 6 sq. yards of *khadi*.

The *charkha* has produced the spirit of self-help in other matters also. It has added to the moral strength of the *ashrama*, along with social and cultural developments. E.g., the male-cooks and the menial servants of the *ashrama* have been since then dispensed with. The ladies now do the cooking and other work by turns. The lady-manager of the *ashrama* informs that the expenses of the *ashrama* are reduced by about Rs. 2,000 to 2,500 per year. This is the economic gain of the *charkha*, but far more praiseworthy is the moral gain. Physical labour and self-help have purified the entire atmosphere of the *ashrama*.

The *Mahipatram Rupram Anath-Ashram* has set a good example to other charitable institutions by adopting the spinning wheel. So long as social crimes throw out unfortunate women from society, such institutions are indispensable. But if the person in charge of such institutions is inspired by high ideals of social service, and puts into practice the constructive programme of Gandhiji, there is hope for moral

uplift of these unfortunate women through honest and honourable way of earning livelihood. The experiment of the *ashrama* reveals what potential capacities lie hidden in the spinning wheel.

DILKHUSH B. DIWANJI

(*Translated from Gujarati*)

GUJARAT NAI TALIM CONFERENCE

A Conference of *Nai Talim* workers of Gujarat was held during the first week of December at Swaraj Ashram, Vedchhi (Bardoli). The resolutions passed at the Conference show how actual experience has led workers to arrive at conclusions different from the opinions generally accepted hitherto. It is not necessary to give a translation of the full text of the resolutions, but the following summary will give sufficient idea of the trend of *Nai Talim* educationists of Gujarat.

Full Planning of Nai Talim

1. (a) The period of basic education should be extended from seven to nine years ,to enable the pupil to be equipped with sufficient knowledge of the craft and intellectual studies. Fourteen years is too young an age to throw the pupil on to the world with a sufficient degree of self-confidence; it is also insufficient to allow him to make an intelligent grasp of some of the subjects and attain skill in the basic craft.

(b) The Post-basic education should begin after nine years of basic education and be carried on for three years, after which there might be a specialization and research-study course of two or three years.

(c) Nai Talim institutions and Government are requested to commence work in and provide facilities for such post-basic and specialization courses, and the Gujarat Nai Talim Sangh (GNTS) is requested to prepare a syllabus for such studies.

Pre-basic Education

As preparatory to and for getting the full benefit of basic education, the Conference regards that it is essential to organize pre-basic education of the child from three to seven. This can best be done near about the houses of the children through mothers. Mothers must therefore be trained for the purpose. GNTS is requested to examine the experiments of the nature of *balwadis* (kindergarten schools) carried on by educational institutions of Gujarat and prepare a guide for giving the teachers of such schools a right approach to the work.

Nai Talim in Social Service

3. The basic principles of *Nai Talim* deserve to be applied in all branches of social service, such as night classes, study circles, *balwadis*, *khadi* and village industries centres, health and welfare centres, sports, tour programmes, etc. GNTS is requested to lay down the fundamental principles applicable to all such activities, and should enrol all such institutions as accept them.

Preparation for Basic Education

4. The Conference recommends that schools which have not been yet converted to Basic schools should, by way of preparing ground and atmosphere for basic education, undertake activities for fostering habits of cleanliness, orderliness, love for calm and silence, prayer, taste for touring and art, and fondness to work for production of necessaries of life, such as *khadi*, vegetables, etc.

Study of English during the Basic period

5. The common experience of all Wardha-method teachers is that the existence of an English teaching school in the same village alongside a Basic school is a great obstacle in the way of the latter. Parents become confused and get drawn to the English school out of mere fear. The basic school is thus almost emptied at an age when the work of first four years should begin to show substantial results. The basic school experiment is thus frustrated leading to doubt and loss of faith in it.

The Conference is firmly of opinion that the introduction of English in standards 5, 6 and 7 strangulates basic education, and earnestly requests the Government of Bombay not to depart from the policy which it has laid down in regard to this matter.

The present trend of public opinion in favour of English is a result of the pro-English policy laid down by the Central Government and not on principles of education. With the diminution of the use of English in Government offices, it will not remain as attractive as it is just now. The Conference requests GNTS and all educationists to educate public opinion in this matter by intensive propaganda.

The Aim of Self-supporting Schools

6. The father of *Nai Talim* (Gandhiji) laid down self-supporting capacity as the test of the success of the Basic school. This is essential both for giving the pupils self-confidence and also for the organization of primary education throughout the country. Institutions associated with GNTS believe that their experience leads them to hope that a nine years' basic school will give sufficient training to the pupil to be self-supporting and the joint production of the whole school will be sufficient to pay the salaries of the teaching staff.

The conference earnestly advises all *Nai Talim* institutions to aim at reaching the ideal of self-supporting schools.

The application of proceeds

7. While the Conference accepts that the purpose of production in schools is to make them self-supporting as a proper ideal, it feels that the present dire poverty of villagers requires that the produce should first be applied to meet the primary necessities of the pupil. Also in order to produce the necessary atmosphere for the ideal of self-sufficiency in cloth, the Conference resolves that every school which has introduced the *charkha* should utilize the *khadi* in the first instance for making the pupils self-sufficient in cloth. For this purpose *khadi* should be given to the pupil for the cost of cotton and weaving charges to be paid by him until he has supplied himself with necessary clothing, and only surplus yarn should go to the institution. Where the pupils are very poor, even the rest of the income should be utilized in their interest.

The place of Takli in Nai Talim

8. The experience of GNTS schools leads them to conclude that spinning should be initially taught on the *charkha*. The Charkha Experts Conference recently held at Sevapuri (Banaras) has also expressed the same opinion. After pupils have well-progressed in spinning on the *charkha* during the first three years, they should be encouraged to learn spinning on the *takli* outside school hours. The *taklis* to be used in schools should be those made from bamboo with a wooden or earthen disc.

Shala-Chakra (School Charkha)

9. The implements used in *Nai Talim* schools should be such as are made from locally available materials, simple and educative. The *shala-chakra* modelled by the Gramashala, Vedchhi, is a simple and cheap wheel, which can be made by pupils themselves. The Conference recommends all *Nai Talim* schools to introduce the pattern and to make further experiments in being self-reliant in respect of implements. It recommends the Bombay Government to introduce the *shalachakra* in all its spinning schools.

Examinations

10. The Conference is of firm opinion that the present system of examinations is an evil which should be immediately banished. Under no circumstances should they be tolerated in *Nai Talim* schools. They kill the spirit of enterprise, self-reliance, inventiveness, co-operation, service, heroism and other characteristics of citizenship and make the pupil service-minded and selfish.

The Conference is of opinion that the student's work of the year, the teacher's opinion and the self-examination of the student himself should be regarded as sufficient test of his capacity. The examination through questions and answers should be replaced by entrusting to the student the execution of a piece of work set to him.

The Conference urges GNTS institutions to make experiments in this direction.

Not Inspectors but Guides

11. The Inspector of Schools should be replaced by the Helping Guide. The duty of the Inspector should not be to find out and report defects of the school and the teacher but like a loving senior colleague to help him become a better teacher.

Burning Problems and Nai Talim

12. The *Nai Talim* can be considered successful only to the extent it creates in the pupil the spirit to take fullest interest in the burning problems of the day — for instance, poverty, dirt, ignorance, immorality, injustice, unemployment, famine, etc. and give him strength and courage to fight these enemies of humanity.

N. D.

(*Translated from Gujarati*)

UNIVERSITY RUFFIANS

A correspondent sends a news item from *The Mail* (Madras) of 7th December, 1949, from which the following is condensed :

> "The students of the Mrs. A. V. N. College celebrated their College anniversary by holding an 'Andhra Day' and a 'College Girls' Day' with various engagements and functions.
>
> "On the 'College Girls' Day', the boys were refused entrance. They protested that it was an insult to them not to be admitted to the girls' function while theirs was open to all, and boycotted the function. Attempt was made on behalf of the management of the college to pacify the students, promising that they would be allowed on the Women's Day. As the students wanted the Principal to apologize, no settlement was reached.
>
> "Two dramas were staged. At the close of the function the boys, who were till then peaceful, became unruly and indulged in stone-throwing. With great difficulty the police conducted the visitors outside the college. Anticipating further trouble, the Principal cancelled all other functions."

It is difficult to understand from the report why attempt was made on behalf of the management to pacify the students by promising that they would be allowed on the Women's Day. It appears to me that the demand to be allowed to participate in the function as well as of apology from the Principal was impudent and ought to have been resisted.

But unfortunately such occurrences have become but too frequent and wide-spread. The intimate spiritual and respectful relation between teacher and student has altogether disappeared in the present-day schools and colleges, and educational institutions have become training centres of *goondas* and bad characters. Decent, peace-loving, studious students are finding it increasingly difficult to feel happy in the college atmosphere. Student life, instead of being felt as the happiest period of one's life has become to the serious student a waste of time, money and energy.

I must also remark that junior, youthful teachers as well as the lewd type of reading matter, which is often prescribed in studies, in the name of literary studies, along with the flood of sex-literature, novels, detective stories, cinemas, etc. are also responsible for this loss of moral balance of the youth.

But over and above these causes is the fundamental defect in the character of what we provide in the name of education. "Youth is the time for practising austerity and residence in forests," said Swami Ramadasa, the great *guru* of Maharashtra, meaning that youth should be a period of discipline with hard physical and mental labour and should not be one of comfortable, pleasure-seeking life. Cities, cinemas, fashionable dresses, and modern luxuries will not create those leaders, who will make the people a great nation.

Nor will military training provide the proper type of hard life and discipline, because modern military training is a mixture of one part of hard work and discipline, and one part of wine, woman and licentiousness. It is not creative. What is needed is the hard life of a productive worker and the simplicity and regularity of a student of *yoga*.

The country will not lose much if all colleges are closed for a period of ten years as preparatory to their removal to fields and forests for new type of education. But this realization is not likely to come until mercantile and communist civilizations have played themselves out.

Wardha, 12-12-'49 K. G. MASHRUWALA

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Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Kalupur, Ahmedabad.
Subscription Rates — Inland: One year, Rs. 6; Six months, Rs. 3; Foreign: One year, Rs. 8, 14 s. or $2